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Advaita Vedanta - Reflections on the Refutation of Jnana-Karma-Samuccaya

A. Definitions (per Advaita-siddhanta)

1. **Jnana (knowledge):** Jnana/knowledge herein refers specifically to brahma-atma-ekatva-jnana that arises as an akhandakara/brahmakara vritti in a prepared mind; this alone sublates avidya/adhyasa. No other vritti removes this fundamental ignorance.
2. **Karma (action):** Any body-mind-intellect (BMI) activity undertaken under ahamkara (limited “I” as knower/doer/enjoyer), within the triputi (pramata-pramana-prameya) framework, prompted by specific vrittis.
3. **Samuccaya (combination):**
 - 3.1 **Saha-samuccaya:** simultaneous co-causality (jnana + karma together as the direct cause of moksha).
 - 3.2 **Krama-samuccaya:** sequential helpfulness (karma as a preparatory, indirect aid; jnana alone as the direct cause).

B. Framing the Debate

4. **Contestation:** Jnana-karma-samuccaya-vada (saha-samuccaya) claims that both jnana and karma are jointly and indispensably the direct cause of moksha.
5. **Alternatives:** (a) jnana-matra as the direct cause; (b) karma-matra as the direct cause; (c) one indirect, the other direct (karma → jnana → moksha or jnana → karma → moksha).

C. Advaita Position in Brief

6. **Jnana-matra:** Moksha is realized by jnana alone.
7. **Karma's limits:** Karma neither directly produces jnana nor results in moksha; it can at best prepare the mind (antahkarana-suddhi, naischalyam) for the rise of jnana.

8. **Post-realization:** With the rise of knowledge, the adhikara for enjoined/kamya karmas is sublated (no more doership). Actions may appear to continue due to prarabdha, but without kartrutva/ bhokrutva in the jnani.

D. Why Jnana and Karma Are Opposed in Kind

9. **Content:** Jnana (brahmakara vritti) is akhanda (non-dual content); karma presupposes khandha (particularized patterns/distinctions) for specific actions.
10. **Ignorance:** Jnana sublates adhyasa; karma presumes adhyasa (doer / enjoyer / knower agent).
11. **Identity:** Jnana negates the jiva-bhava; karma assumes it.
12. **Agency:** Jnana dissolves ahamkara; karma requires it.
13. **Triputi:** Jnana obliterates triputi; karma operates only with triputi intact.
14. **Tantra-bheda:** Jnana is vastu-tantra (dependent on Reality revealed); karma is purusha-tantra (dependent on the doer's choice/omission/modification).

E. Nature of Avidya, Jnana, Moksha (Advaita)

15. **Avidya as adhyasa:** Fundamental superimposition of the BMI upon Chaitanya/Brahman and vice versa.
16. **Jnana:** Right recognition of Chaitanya /Brahman as one's own Self, via brahmakara vritti born of mahavakya-sravana in a prepared mind.
17. **Moksha:** Cessation of adhyasa (ignorance sublated); abidance as akarta/abhokta Brahman.

F. Why Karma Presupposes Avidya

18. **Ahamkara genesis:** Adhyasa operating in a functioning antahkarana yields ahamkara (the limited 'I').
19. **Agency:** With ahamkara, the pramata appropriates kartrutva and becomes karta of karma (be it sakama or nishkama).
20. **Triputi field:** The extrovert antahkarana takes anatman as vishaya, generating prama within triputi.

21. **Conclusion:** Every karma rests on distinction and agency, i.e., on avidya.

G. How Jnana Directly Removes Avidya

22. **Targeted removal:** Only brahmakara vritti sublates ignorance; other vrittis may yield empirical knowledge but do not remove adhyasa.

23. **Content of knowledge:** Recognition of the immutable, infinite Consciousness as the true nature of “I” dissolves the false identification with the limited individuality.

24. **After-effect:** With adhyasa gone, the link between the real ‘I’ and the functioning antahkarana is no longer owned; agency falls away.

H. Why Saha-Samuccaya Is Untenable

25. **Polar opposites:** Karma needs doership; jnana cancels doership.

26. **Simultaneity problem:** The very rise of liberating knowledge undermines the conditions that make karma possible as a means. Karma requires kartrutva, which is eliminated by the genesis of jnana.

27. **Adhikara-loss:** Hence, a jnani has no scriptural liability to perform enjoined/kamya karma; any apparent action is non-owned.

I. What Advaita Accepts - Krama-Samuccaya

28. **Role of nishkama-karma:** As a preparator, it purifies the mind (chitta-suddhi), reduces extroversion, and fosters viveka.

29. **Manda-Madhyama-adhikari:** Highly useful for manda/madhyama adhikaris; not the sole route - upasana, sadhana, and other disciplines may also prepare the mind.

30. **Uttama-adhikari:** May come endowed with chitta-suddhi (from prior samskaras) and proceed swiftly to knowledge.

31. **Bottom line:** Karma is an optional but powerful aid, never the direct cause of moksha.

J. The Direct Means to Jnana

32. **Sadhana-chatushtaya:** Pre-requisites are Viveka (nitya-anitya-vastu-viveka); Vairagya (dispassion born of viveka); Samadi-shatka-sampatti (sama, dama, uparati, titiksha, shraddha, samadhana); Mumukshutva (earnest longing for liberation).
33. **Knowledge-process-sadhana:** In such an antahkarana, sravana (mahavakya-upadesha), manana (doubt-removal), nididhyasana (steady assimilation) produce the brahmakara vritti and firm abidance in Truth.
34. These disciplines directly lead to knowledge; karma's role is only to make the antahkarana prepare for the pre-requisites and subsequent sadhana (adhikari-yogyata).

K. Isvara's/ Bhagavan's Grace

35. **Grace and eligibility:** The dawn of viveka itself is by Isvara-prasada; the tattva-darshi guru is grace manifest.
36. **Gift of recognition:** The final recognition too is not at the ego's command. It is the very natural grace of the Self itself.

L. The Jivanmukta and the Appearance of Action

37. **Vyavahara continues:** As long as BMI-prarabdha persist, functions continue in the world.
38. **Decisive difference:** The jnani, being akarta/abhokta, owns no agency and no bondage of results; "giving up karma" is moot since karma as binding is already sublated.
39. **Avidya's hold:** For the ajnani, adhyasa fuels doership/enjoyership and hence bondage.

M. Concluding Synthesis

40. Advaita's refutation of jnana-karma saha-samuccaya rests on a clean analysis of adhyasa, agency, and tripiti.
41. Jnana alone is moksha's direct cause; karma is at best a highly helpful, albeit optional, pre-requisite conditioner (krama-samuccaya), never a co-cause.
42. Post-knowledge, enjoined doership falls away; only the semblance of action remains, spent by prarabdha, without an owner.

Purvapaksha – Siddhanta Discussion:

Purvapaksha: Why are vedadhyayana and other karmas unnecessary for moksha?

Siddhanta: Because karma presupposes kartrutva-bhava (doership) based on avidya/adhyasa, while liberating jnana cancels doership. Since karma rests on avidya/adhyasa and jnana sublates it, the two cannot jointly be the direct cause of moksha. Karmas may prepare (chitta-suddhi), but they do not produce liberation.

Purvapaksha: Why does Swami Sankaracharya deny jnana-karma saha-samucchaya or anga-angi bhava between jnana and karma?

Siddhanta: Jnana and karma are opposed in kind: jnana is vastu-tantra and dissolves triputi and ahamkara; karma is purusha-tantra and requires them. Therefore karma cannot be an anga (constitutive limb) of the direct means to moksha. Swami Sankaracharya highlights the mutual exclusivity of knowledge and ignorance “like light and darkness” (tejas timira iva), especially in the Adhyasa Bhashya and across the Chatusutri

Purvapaksha: Why is Swami Sankaracharya against karma being an anga for jnana?

Siddhanta: Because making karma an anga of knowledge would import doership into the very means that destroys doership. This is a logical contradiction. Karma can ready the mind (krama-samucchaya) but cannot co-operate simultaneously with jnana as a co-cause (saha-samucchaya).

Purvapaksha: Why should a jnani give up karma?

Siddhanta: “Giving up” is not an injunction for a jnani; it is the natural state after the fall of doership. Without kartrutva-bhava, there is no performer to own action. The BMI may still move by prarabdha, but there is no agent inside to accrue bondage.

Purvapaksha: Swami Sankaracharya often says, ‘How can you mix light and darkness?’ Where is the root of this argument?

Siddhanta: The clearest source is Adhyasa Bhashya where Swami Sankara establishes adhyasa and the mutual exclusivity of knowledge and ignorance. The Chatusutri discussions extend this foundation.

Purvapaksha: If karma cannot co-cause moksha, why do the sastras prescribe so many karmas, and for whom?

Siddhanta: Prescriptions address the ajnani (one under adhyasa) to purify and steady the mind: sakama karma (for worldly aims), nishkama karma (for chitta-suddhi), upasana (for chitta-ekagrata). These create adhikari-yogyata for Vedantic inquiry. They are not injunctions for a jnani.

Purvapaksha: How does one ‘transcend’ from being a karma-doer to a ‘karma-ignorer’?

Siddhanta: Advaita does not teach “karma-ignoring.” It teaches doership-sublation. Through sadhana-chatushtaya pre-requisite and sravana-manana-nididhyasana sadhana, the seeker gains jnana. With knowledge, ownership of action falls away. Activities may appear, but no one inside owns them. This is moksha.

Purvapaksha: In sadhana, where should one give up and where should one never give up?

Siddhanta: It is not about doing or giving up particular motions; it is about dropping the sense of agency. Until knowledge dawns, one cannot give up karma entirely (Srimad Bhagavad Gita echoes this prudence), but one can renounce karma-phala and sakama tendencies, practice nishkama-karma, upasana, and pursue sadhana-chatushtaya & sravana-manana-nididhyasana toward doership-sublation.

Purvapaksha: Give the definitive concept behind why sastras insist on karmas for people yet say a jnani stays away from karma.

Siddhanta: Two tracks: preparatory means vs liberating means. Karmas are for the preparatory track (purity, steadiness). Liberation is by knowledge alone.

Purvapaksha: Where is this first referenced in SankaraBhashya so we can go to the origin within Swami Sankaracharya?

Siddhanta: Begin with Adhyasa Bhashya (prelude to Brahma-sutra) for the master key: nature of adhyasa, mutual exclusivity of knowledge and ignorance, and why jnana - not karma - directly liberates. Then study the Chatusutri commentaries, where Swami Sankaracharya consistently safeguards the primacy of knowledge and the non-co-causality of karma.

Purvapaksha: Is upasana an anga of jnana?

Siddhanta: Upasana (saguna meditation) steadies and refines the mind (chitta-ekagrata) and can be part of krama-samucchaya. But the direct liberating means is aparoksha-jnana born of sravana-manana-nididhyasana; upasana is not a co-cause of moksha.

Purvapaksha: Are sravana-manana-nididhyasana themselves 'karmas'?

Siddhanta: They are jnana-sadhana - operations of understanding/assimilation whose phala is knowledge (an akhandakara-vritti with Brahman as content), not a ritual work producing a finite result. Hence, they belong to the knowledge-track, not to ritual karma co-causality.

Purvapaksha: Must one take sannyasa to gain jnana?

Siddhanta: External sannyasa is highly salutary for many, but the essence is inner renunciation of doership and attachment. Advaita's decisive mark is knowledge; when knowledge dawns, doership falls, whether or not external forms are adopted.

Purvapaksha: Are women, children, and lower-caste members eligible for sannyasa and jnana? Scriptures bar certain groups from Vedic study and sannyasa; therefore, they cannot gain jnana.

Siddhanta: Yes - jnana is universally accessible: Atman is not limited by gender, birth, or age, and scripture affirms all can attain the highest good. Advaita distinguishes karma eligibility (which some smritis restrict) from brahma-vidya jnana, which arises from a qualified mind, not from karma co-causality; thus women, children and non-elite varnas are eligible for realization when endowed with sadhana-chatushtaya and taught by a competent guru. External sannyasa can help but is not a metaphysical prerequisite - the essence is inner renunciation of doership.

Regardless of gender or birth, practice nishkama-karma and Ishvara-upasana for chitta-suddhi and chitta-ekagrata, cultivate sadhana-chatushtaya, and seek a qualified guru for sravana-manana-nididhyasana. Liberation follows from jnana alone; external forms (including robes) are secondary supports, not co-causes.

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